



November 10, 2004

## **Twenty-six are charged in a multi-agency task force investigation of a suspected drug trafficking network**

A multi-agency task force investigation led by **Providence Police**, the **Drug Enforcement Administration**, the **United States Attorney's Office** and the **Rhode Island Attorney General's Office** has resulted in drug-trafficking charges against 26 individuals. The investigation, which bore the code name **Operation Royal Flush**, targeted suspected members and associates of the Almighty Latin Kings Nation believed to be trafficking in cocaine and marijuana.

United States Attorney Robert Clark Corrente, Rhode Island Attorney General Patrick C. Lynch, Colonel Dean Esserman, Chief of the Providence Police Department, Mark R. Trouville, Special Agent in Charge of the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), Colonel Steven M. Pare, Superintendent of the Rhode Island State Police, Thomas Wlodyka, Resident Agent in Charge of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), Kenneth W. Kaiser, Special Agent in Charge of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), U.S. Marshal Burton Stallwood, Robin Avers, Special Agent in Charge of the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), and East Providence Police Chief Hubert J. Paquette jointly announced federal indictments against nine defendants, federal complaints brought against six others and state complaints brought against 11 more.

"This investigation featured remarkably complex coordination of energy and expertise among all of the participating agencies," U.S. Attorney Corrente said. "Each brought a different

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skill and all were critical to the success of the investigation. As a result, there are defendants charged with trafficking in significant quantities of crack cocaine and multi-pound amounts of marijuana. Agents have also seized about \$200,000 worth of assets.”

Over the past two weeks, Task Force agents arrested 21 of the defendants on either federal or state complaints and are seeking five more. The investigation is continuing.

Attorney General Lynch said, "Through cooperative efforts, we can do much to protect Rhode Islanders' quality of life. Our Narcotics and Organized Crime Unit looks forward to prosecuting the State's cases as vigorously as possible to help rid our neighborhoods of the poisons that are illegal drugs, as well as of the gang members who deal them."

Agents have seized from various defendants \$100,420 in currency and four vehicles valued at about \$99,270 – a 2004 Accura, a 2001 BMW, a 1998 Volvo, and a 2003 Avalanche. Additional assets allegedly tied to the network are being sought.

“The arrests of these gang members and their criminal associates will send a clear message that there is no turf that DEA and our law enforcement partners will give up to gangs,” said DEA Special Agent in Charge Trouville. “If you traffic in drugs, in our neighborhoods, watch your back. These arrests are a beginning, not an end. This investigation was successful due to the hard work of the Providence Police Department, East Providence Police Department, Pawtucket Police Department and the Newport Police Department.”

The investigation began late last year, when the Providence Police Narcotics and Organized Crime Bureau developed information that members and associates of the Latin Kings might be dealing in significant amounts of crack cocaine. Providence Police then worked with DEA to assemble the Task Force.

"This is truly a significant day for our city and the members of the Providence Police,” said Colonel Esserman. “I wish to recognize our deputy chief, Commander Paul J. Kennedy,

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Lieutenant Thomas A. Verdi, head of the narcotics and Organized Crime Unit, and two of his investigators, Robert M. Enright and Joseph A. Colundano, who worked tirelessly on this investigation.” In addition, I wish to recognize the efforts of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration and the United States Attorney's Office for their hard work in helping to bring this case to a successful conclusion."

Eight federal, state, and municipal law enforcement agencies have contributed resources to Operation Royal Flush: **Providence Police, DEA, ATF, the FBI, ICE, the U.S. Marshals Service, Rhode Island State Police, and East Providence Police.** In addition, **Newport and Pawtucket Police** have detectives assigned to the DEA Task Force that worked on the investigation. The U.S. Attorney's Office and the Rhode Island Attorney General's Office are coordinating the prosecution of the cases. The **Internal Revenue Service, Criminal Investigations**, is joining the investigation.

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(An attachment describes the specific charges against the defendants who have been arrested)